

NOTE ON THE OCCURRENCE AND
DISTRIBUTION OF *HERPETOMONAS*
PEDICULI

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As much attention is now being paid to the problems of the transmission of leishmaniasis, spirochaetosis and trypanosomiasis, it may be of interest to add a few notes regarding *Herpetomonas pediculi*, a parasite recently described by me from the digestive tract of the human body louse, *Pediculus vestimenti*, in England.

H. pediculi is a flagellate Protozoön passing through three stages in its life cycle, namely, preflagellate, flagellate and post-flagellate stages. In its resting condition (preflagellate or post-flagellate) it greatly resembles both in size and structure the Leishman-Donovan body, and the non-flagellate stages of trypanosomes (Fantham, 1911). As I have been careful to point out, after breeding and feeding experiments with infected lice on my own body, it has no connection with *Leishmania* or *Trypanosoma*, but is a natural flagellate of the louse.

Since publishing my account of the parasite, I have found it in head lice (*P. capitis*) in England. The *Herpetomonas* occurs in the digestive tract of the head lice, and is apparently identical with *H. pediculi* from the body louse.

From personal communications, I gather that *H. pediculi* has been seen by Captain Mackie, I.M.S., in body lice in Bombay, and by Dr. Blaizot, in lice in Tunis. In each case, the main object of the examination of the Pediculi was in connection with the transmission of human spirochaetosis. Apparently the herpetomonad infections in lice in the tropics are heavier than those in England.

Herpetomonas pediculi, then, is now known to occur in human body lice and head lice in England, and in body lice in India and in Tunisia. The geographical distribution, consequently, is much wider than was at first thought when I published my paper, and, hence, the occurrence of natural flagellates in lice is of greater importance than was at first supposed in dealing with the problems of the transmission of kala-azar and allied diseases.

REFERENCES

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